



Post Adoption: Big Feelings and Big Behaviors

You've fostered your child for 6 months, a year, or even longer, but now the adoption is finalized. The child you prayed over and loved is legally your own. You've held a celebration with friends and family and received accolades from attorneys and judges. The legal process is over and you're excited that the hard part is finally over. While the legal process is over, for most children, dealing with the hard stuff continues. Watching your little or teenager struggle with the trauma he's experienced, the feelings he has that no one seems to understand, and wondering if you really love him is still hard post-adoption. Your child has experienced significant trauma, including separation from his first parents, so it's not surprising he continues to worry, to be angry and feel insecure and unworthy. These are big feelings and big feelings can lead to big behaviors.

Here are a few things to remember as you navigate post-adoption behavior challenges:

- Spend one-on-one time with your child. Continue to establish your parent/child attachment through activities your child enjoys.
- Remember that every behavior addresses a child's felt need. Spend time reflecting on the big behavior. What occurred immediately before or after the behavior? What triggered the behavior? What need is the child trying to meet?
- Stay connected to your child. Even when big behaviors occur, work to stay connected with your child. For instance, remain close by, offer a drink or some protein. Speak to your child in a calm voice, affirming your love and his preciousness.
- Give your child permission to talk about big feelings. Calmly share your own big feelings of anger, frustration, worthlessness, lack of control, sadness or fear. Sharing your own big feelings teaches your child how to appropriately express his feelings in appropriate, healing ways.
- Show yourself grace and remember to breathe. Forgive yourself and ask your child for forgiveness when you respond with your own big behavior! Helping a child heal can be exhausting, so find healthy outlets for your own feelings. With ongoing connection, opportunities to explore feelings and reassurance, most big behaviors will be resolved.

For mental health and post adoption resources visit: raisethefuture.org (formerly Adoption Exchange)

If you are in need of additional support and services, contact the county where your finalization occurred or info@project127.org.